

# THE PLATFORM



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This publication was written, printed and distributed on the land of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

This land was stolen by white colonisers, sovereignty has never been ceded. We must act in solidarity with Aboriginal people in their fight for justice.

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**T**he federal election came and went. The Liberal government has been returned with a one seat majority, and an assemblage of right-wing political parties and independents now hold the balance of power in the Senate.

The abuse and torture of Aboriginal peoples inside and outside of the criminal justice system continues, the Northern Territory 'intervention' continues, and the closure of indigenous communities in Western Australia continues. Refugees continue to be detained, tortured and abused on Manus Island, Nauru, and in other parts of Australia's immigration detention regime. The leaking of thousands of documents confirming ongoing abuse has barely raised an eyebrow. After fourteen months of record high global temperatures and devastation across the Great Barrier Reef, the Australian government remains committed to expanding coal and gas production whilst doing nothing to address carbon emissions. There are ongoing attacks on our working conditions, wages, welfare, health and education systems, to which we cling for survival.

All in all, it's business as usual in Australia. And it is much the same under the Turnbull Liberal government now as it would have been had Bill Shorten and Labor won the recent election. No amount of electoral campaigning, no new party leader, and no new government is going to address these issues. The Australian government, and all major groupings within the Australian political class, are part of the system that has created and continues to create these problems. If we want to change the world, it is up to us to fight for that change, and it is up to us to organise the collective power required to defeat the bosses and governments that continue to dominate and rule us.

Anarchist Affinity is a group in Melbourne organising and campaigning to build that collective power. We are anti-racist and anti-sexist, unequivocally opposed to the state and capitalism, and committed to a vision of libertarian communism. If you want to find out more, check out our statement of principles (pg 39) and get in touch.

See you on the barricades.

Anarchist Affinity  
August 2016.

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# THE WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK CAMPAIGN AND 'WOMEN'S WORK' UNDER CAPITALISM

By Rebecca Winter and Jasmina Brankovich



## Introduction

*"Why has woman's work never been of any account? [...] Because those who want to emancipate mankind [sic] have not included woman in their dream of emancipation, and consider it beneath their superior masculine dignity to think "of those kitchen arrangements," which they have rayed on the shoulders of that drudge-woman.[...]Let us fully understand that a revolution, intoxicated with the beautiful words Liberty, Equality, Solidarity would not be a revolution if it maintained slavery at home. Half of humanity subjected to the slavery of the hearth would still have to rebel*

*against the other half"* – Peter Kropotkin (1).

Caring work, reproductive labour, affective work: there are different names to describe the type of unpaid work conducted in the so-called 'private', domestic sphere of the nuclear family; yet it is essential, life-giving work. If there was no one willing to wipe the bums of babies, to do the laundry, to cook food, or to care for those who need support, none of us would live well, and for some it would be a question of survival. Yet, the labour that goes into reproducing us as human beings – in the form of child-rearing and caring, house-

work, and emotional support – is frequently under-appreciated, and almost always either under-paid or unpaid. It is also a form of labour that is, in global terms, predominantly performed by women, especially women of colour.

This gendered division of reproductive labour is often justified on the grounds that women are 'naturally' suited for caring roles, and that this work is not exploitative because women do it out of love for their families. We argue, however, that the gendered division of reproductive labour is an important tool of patriarchal, racist capitalism.

By presenting reproductive labour as not being 'real work,' women's labour is devalued, which allows capitalists to easily exploit it, while also perpetuating patriarchal social relations which privilege paid work in the 'public' sphere when performed by men. This also functions to reproduce racism, as women of colour often perform this work, by taking on the reproductive labour of wealthy families as well as in their own homes. We argue that it is vital for anarchists and other anti-capitalists to examine the role of reproductive labour under capitalism and reconceptualise what it means to be a worker. In other words, "the strategy of feminist class struggle is [...] based on the wageless woman in the home [...] whose position in the wage structure is low especially, but not only, if she is Black" (2).

## **Reproductive labour and its discontents**

*"Why deny that caring for people is the very stuff of life? Basic to relationships. Basic to human survival. Yet treated as worthless. Women give their all, but it's not mutual and it's not paid"* – Selma James (3).

Prior to the 1970s, during the 'golden era' of growth in post-Second World War capitalism, the state supplemented the interest of capital in raising the future workforce, with heavily subsidised investment. However, since the advent of neoliberalism in the 1970s we have seen increased disinvestment by the state in the 'private' sphere. Women were increasingly 'welcomed' to the paid workforce, but often still find themselves left with a 'second-shift' of reproductive labour at the end of the day.

More recently cuts to state funding have meant that workers in the aged care, nursing, disability, and child care sectors (most of whom are women), are increasingly forced into precarious casual employment, with little job security and inadequate wages. Cuts to social services and welfare programs have been made worse by privatisation of essential services, and have left those performing unpaid reproductive work with few avenues of support and little financial independence.

In the first volume of the *Capital*, Karl Marx describes the paid labour conditions of men, women, and children, toiling in the factories of 19th-century industrial England. But, while Marx's work

***"They aimed to challenge the idea that reproductive labour is an 'unproductive', less valuable form of work, which must be performed in addition to a person's 'real work.'"***

explores the creation of this kind of 'productive' labour (which generates profit for capitalists), he was silent on the important role of reproductive work in capitalism. Marx's focus was on the way capitalists extract the maximum profit from workers by paying them much less than their labour is worth. Like many other socialist and anarchist thinkers, however, he neglected to think about those (predominantly women) who work outside of the wage system, or who perform unpaid work alongside waged work.

A key challenge to this limited view of work and capitalism has been provided by the writings and activism of autonomist Marxist feminists. The work of autonomist feminists redefined the 'private sphere' of the home as a sphere of relations of production and a site of potential anti-capitalist organising (4).

In 1972, the International Wages for Housework Campaign was launched by activists including Selma James, Silvia Federici and Maria Dalla Costa. The campaign challenged the idea that housework, child care and emotional labour did not count as 'real' work by demanding that it was reconceptualised as if it were paid. As Federici explained: "To say that we want money for housework is the first step towards refusing to do

it, because the demand for a wage makes our work visible, which is the most indispensable condition to begin to struggle against it, both in its immediate aspect as housework, and its more insidious character as femininity" (5).

By challenging the unpaid status of housework, the Wages for Housework campaign sought to undermine the division between paid and unpaid workers under capitalism, and create the space for women to think of themselves as workers with a right to struggle for liveable working conditions inside the home, as well as outside it.

The solution, according to Wages for Housework activists, was not for individual families or care-givers to simply be paid by the state or capitalists, or for individual men and women to just share unpaid reproductive work. They argued that reproductive work should be collectivised, controlled by those who performed the work, and used to engage community members in rethinking what unpaid labour represented, and the benefits it accrued to capitalists. They aimed to challenge the idea that reproductive labour is an 'unproductive', less valuable form of work, which must be performed in addition to a person's 'real work.'

However, it's not enough to

think about how women's reproductive labour benefits the capitalist class – we must also think about how it benefits men and maintains a patriarchal social structure. Heidi Hartmann notes that it's not simply a coincidence that the gendered division of reproductive labour "places men in a superior, and women in a subordinate, position" (6). The fact that many men receive a wage for their work, while many women do not, creates an inequality in economic power which facilitates men's control over women's lives. Ultimately, the gendered division of labour props up a patriarchal, white supremacist capitalist system, which the vast majority would be better off without. However, under the current system, the fact that men are not obliged to take on as much housework, child care, or care of family members is often perceived as a benefit, a privilege, which some men will fight to keep. This happens even when women in the family participate in paid work on an equivalent basis to men. Recognising this helps us understand why campaigns which focus on reproductive labour, such as Wages for Housework, can face a backlash by men, including those who claim to be comrades in the anti-capitalist struggle.

The ideas of the Wages for Housework campaign have since been continued in the Global Women's Strike movement, as but one example of Selma James' legacy. Women from 60 countries, including Argentina, Peru, India, Uganda

and the UK, took part in a strike on International Women's Day in 2004. The Global Women's Strike was organised under the banner of 'Resources for Caring Not Killing' (7). In addition to wages for housework, the movement demanded access to social housing, free education, clean water, and debt abolition for 'Third World' nations. They strongly opposed military spending and demanded that women's unpaid emotional labour be financially compensated by divestments from military activities, thus again drawing attention to the unjust division of resources under capitalism (8).

### **The gendered division of labour in contemporary Australia**

*"We both had careers, both had to work a couple of days a week to earn enough to live on, so why shouldn't we share the housework? So I suggested it to my mate and he agreed – most men are too hip to turn you down flat. You're right, he said. It's only fair. Then an interesting thing happened [...] The longer my husband contemplated these chores, the more repulsed he became, and so proceeded the change from the normally sweet, considerate Dr. Jekyll into the crafty Mr. Hyde who would stop at nothing to avoid the horrors of housework" – Pat Mainardi (9).*

What are some of the ways that the gendered division of reproductive labour functions under con-



temporary Australian capitalism? While mainstream pundits argue that feminist struggles are unnecessary today, women in Australia are still overwhelmingly overrepresented in unpaid and underpaid forms of labour, such as childcare, housework and emotional labour. Unpaid labour is essential to the functioning of Australian capitalism. In 2006, the value of unpaid household work, and volunteer and community work ranged from \$416 billion to \$586 billion, which represents 41.6% to 58.7% of GDP for that year (10).

On average, women perform two thirds of all unpaid work in the home (such as cleaning, food preparation, laundry), while men perform two thirds of waged work. Living with a partner (without children) increases the household labour women perform by six hours, when compared with women who live alone or in shared housing. However, men who live with their partners experience no increase in unpaid labour. Despite many more women taking part in paid work in addition to household labour, on average women in Australia spend the same amount of time on housework in 2006 as they did in 1992 (11).

In addition to household chores and maintenance, Australian women are significantly more likely to take on child care responsibilities. Female parents perform more than two and a half times the amount of childcare taken on by male parents. Mothers are more

likely to perform "physical and emotional care duties" (43%, compared with 27% for fathers), while fathers spend more time on "play activities" (41%, compared with 25% for mothers) (12).

Another less recognised aspect of women's unpaid labour is the pressure placed on women to perform emotional labour to 'keep everyone happy.' Modern ideas about what it is to be a 'good woman' or wife/partner frequently emphasise the importance of emotional work. Often falsely naturalised under the guise of comments about 'women's intuition', women are frequently tasked with responsibility for maintaining the emotional wellbeing of their family, partner and social groups. These ideas bleed into the sexual realm, as right-wing commentators like Bettina Arndt urge us to 'take one for the team' and consider having sex with a partner as just another chore, like taking out the bins (13). Sex can end up being added to the list of duties a woman is expected to perform as part of her day. Federici writes that "for women sex is work; giving pleasure is part of what is expected of every woman [...] In the past, we were just expected to raise children. Now we are expected to have a waged job, still clean the house and have children and, at the end of a double workday, be ready to hop in bed and be sexually enticing" (14).

In many ways, women's emotional labour does not end in the home. In social justice and an-



***"In many ways, women's emotional labour does not end in the home. In social justice and anti-capitalist organising circles, we all too frequently see the overrepresentation of women in facilitation, conflict resolution, and in grievance collectives."***

ti-capitalist organising circles, we all too frequently see the overrepresentation of women in facilitation, conflict resolution, and in grievance collectives. These roles are vital to the continued existence of functional social movements. But women's work is often unrecognised, under-appreciated, and seen as less valuable than roles typically performed by men, such as leading protest actions, acting as media spokespersons, and frontline banner carriers. In this way, even otherwise egalitarian socialist and anarchist groups can reproduce the gendered division of labour that is the hallmark of patriarchal capitalism.

The consequences of this gendered division of waged work and unpaid reproductive labour for women are extremely significant. Women are more likely to bear responsibility for unpaid work, perform part-time work, and work in areas that are underpaid due to being classed as 'women's work.' This puts many women in a much more financially precarious position than many men, often forcing them to rely on a waged partner for financial security. Being financially dependent on a partner makes it more difficult for women to escape abusive relationships. Women in Australia are significantly more likely to more likely to live and die

in poverty in old age, as they often cannot accumulate sufficient savings or superannuation due to time spent performing underpaid waged work or unpaid reproductive work. Moreover, because reproductive labour for one's family is not seen as 'real work', women typically lack the benefits and protections won by paid workers (such as, limited work hours, time off, wages, collective support).

### **Implications of reproductive labour for anti-capitalist resistance**

*"One part of the class with a salary, the other without. This discrimination has been the basis of a stratification of power between the paid and the non-paid, the root of the class weakness which movements of the left have only increased" – Lotta Feminista (15).*

What lessons should we draw from the Wages for Housework campaign and its focus on women's reproductive labour? The Wages for Housework campaign was important in that it challenges us to think about the ways that the capitalist concept of 'work' devalues the work of women, in particular women of colour, and therefore makes it more difficult to challenge the exploitation which comes with it.

The campaign also shows us

## ***"We need to think about how we can struggle as unwaged workers"***

how the idea that reproductive labour is something women are naturally suited to, and that it is something which ought to be done 'for love', is a key ideological tool for patriarchal, white supremacist capitalism. The wage gap between men and women in waged labour market persists partly because women are designated as 'natural' bearers of reproductive labour. An analysis of reproductive labour is especially important in the current period of significant increases in precarious, feminised service work. The devaluation of women's work contributes to poor conditions in paid work generally. Again we see how patriarchy and capitalism work together – capital benefits from free or cheap labour, and men gain perceived advantages from having women take on the majority of low-status caring work. This dichotomy between 'public' and 'private' work undermines our struggles against oppression and must be challenged.

The Wages for Housework campaign also has important lessons for contemporary anti-capitalist organising efforts. Women, and others who perform reproductive work, are usually marginalised within anti-capitalist struggles. The home isn't seen as a potential site for workplace organising. Housework, parenting, sex work, elder care, and emotional labour aren't seen as worker's issues. As

Federici comments, "We are seen as nagging bitches, not workers in struggle" (16). We need to remember how broad and diverse the working class is as a social force. Women of colour are the biggest section within the global working class. Workers labour in the home, in the child care centre, and in nursing homes, as well as in factories. 'Labour' is not only about waged labour. By thinking about the role of reproductive labour plays in our societies, we can draw attention to the gendered and racialised dimensions of capitalist exploitation. The idea of reproductive labour also opens up new possibilities for anti-capitalist resistance. We need to think about how we can struggle as unwaged workers – what strategies and tactics we can employ when our 'boss' is not a clearly identifiable authority figure, but rather an economic and social system. While this form of action raises challenges, it also raises opportunities for us to spread anti-capitalist workers' struggle into every home, and all parts of our communities. Only by accepting this challenge will we have any chance of creating the broad, diverse workers' movements we need to successfully challenge capitalism, patriarchy and white supremacy.



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# WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK

## NOTICE TO ALL GOVERNMENTS

The women of the world are serving notice. We clean your homes and factories. We raise the next generation of workers for you. Whatever else we may do, we are the housewives of the world. In return for our work, you have only asked us to work harder.

We are serving notice to you that we intend to be paid for the work we do. We want wages for every dirty toilet, every painful childbirth, every indecent assault, every cup of coffee and every smile. And if we don't get what we want, then we will simply refuse to work any longer.

We have brought our children to be good citizens and to respect your laws and you have put them in factories, in prisons, in ghettos and in typing pools. Our children deserve more than you can offer and now we will bring them up to EXPECT more.

We have borne babies for you when you needed more workers, and we have submitted to sterilization when you didn't. Our wombs are not government property any longer.

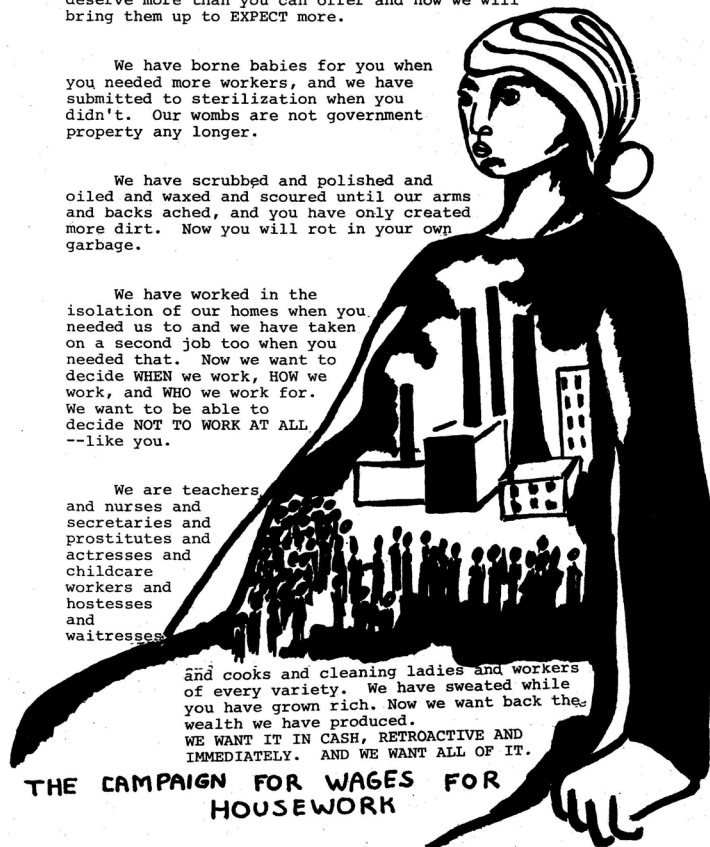
We have scrubbed and polished and oiled and waxed and scoured until our arms and backs ached, and you have only created more dirt. Now you will rot in your own garbage.

We have worked in the isolation of our homes when you needed us to and we have taken on a second job too when you needed that. Now we want to decide WHEN we work, HOW we work, and WHO we work for. We want to be able to decide NOT TO WORK AT ALL --like you.

We are teachers and nurses and secretaries and prostitutes and actresses and childcare workers and hostesses and waitresses

and cooks and cleaning ladies and workers of every variety. We have sweated while you have grown rich. Now we want back the wealth we have produced. WE WANT IT IN CASH, RETROACTIVE AND IMMEDIATELY. AND WE WANT ALL OF IT.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK



A poster from the Wages for Housework campaign in 1975

# SOCIAL ANARCHISM, INDIVIDUALISM AND LIFESTYLE POLITICS

By Tom



**I**n this article, I'll look at two key tendencies in anarchist theory – individualist anarchism and social anarchism – and look at some important differences between them. Advocates of both tendencies put forward a range of different ideas about strategy and how we should think about society, and they lead to different forms of action and understanding. I'll argue that while social anarchism arose from the workers' movement and forms of collective struggle, individualism was born out of both bourgeois

intellectualism and the despair of individuals at the failure of movements.

As you can well imagine by its name, individualist anarchism appears to start, and end, with the demand of maximum liberty for the individual. There are to be no fetters on the development of the so called natural qualities of the individual, and while everyone should be free, it really begins with personal struggle and ends with the individual's struggle. The only freedom you have is what you can take. Society is also thought



to be as much a crushing source of authority as the state. There are to be no programmes set for what anarchism might look like, because everyone has different wants and needs. Rebellion is emphasised over revolution – revolution will either lead to a new state or to a new social tyranny. Despite rhetoric against capitalism, market economics are permissible provided there is no boss-worker relationship (although sometimes that's ok too!). It is this retreat into the self that actually shares a lot of parallels with new age spirituality, with existentialism and most importantly with neo-liberal capitalism.

As a political ideology, individualism did not have much influence during the emergence of the working class, nor did it do much to shape collective politics of rebellion. Individualists often expressed their 'anarchism' and 'freedom' through forms of dress, individual acts of insurrection, and living in small communities of other radicals only. While today we use the word 'insurrection' to mean something like when a community/class violently attacks a regime/authority, the connection between the term insurrection and anarchism actually comes from the work of Max Stirner, who believed revolution was impossible, and that individual 'insurrection' was the only tactic that would keep authority at bay, however temporarily. It was during times of severe social repression, when little other avenue for struggle existed, that individu-

alist anarchism did come to attention - usually with assassinations and bombings – and this image of the anarchist bomb thrower still exists. Terrorism became, and to a large degree remains, the peak form of struggle for this tendency. I don't want to say much on it, but I believe that the terrorist and guerilla war is a Leninist strategy, not an anarchist one, despite the flowery rhetoric. The most famous example of this strategy today is the Conspiracy of Fire Cells in Greece. They're a group known for robbing banks, having shoot outs with police, and bringing 'left wing terrorism' back to Europe. They're all arrested now, and have been involved in struggles for prisoners' rights and hunger strikes over the last few years.

So then, what's social anarchism?

Taking freedom as the basis of anarchism, I want to start with a quote from the Russian anarchist Mikhail Bakunin. He writes: "The individual, their freedom and reason, are the products of society, and not vice versa; society is not the product of individuals comprising it; and the greater their freedom - and the more they are the product of society, the more do they receive from society, and the greater their debt to it" (1).

Here we find a definition of freedom based entirely on social bonds - what Bakunin is saying is that we are all products of social development – it is through relationships and education we find



***"The withdrawal of self-styled anarchists from social movements for activities that don't require long-term commitment, thinking, responsibility or coherence is a serious problem"***

the ideas, motivations and influences that will make us free. Without the development of all, without equality, we will never know real freedom. The freer the person beside you is, the freer you are. Social anarchism is therefore inherently committed to collective methods of organisation - be it through forms as various as unions, affinity groups, syndicates, communes, or whatever. Social anarchism is also socialist in its economics. We owe a great debt to Marx for the understanding of economics he developed - it's over questions of political organisation that we divide.

It's this idea of freedom through solidarity that found such fertile ground in the workers' movement. The ideas of social anarchists, particularly Bakunin, Kropotkin and Malatesta flourished in many parts of the world, namely Spain, Italy, Argentina and had profound influence on the mass anarchist organisations like the CNT in Spain and the FORA in Argentina. In comparison, while social anarchism first found its roots in the federalist sections of the First International, in the Paris commune, and in the emerging union movements, individualism came to prominence as anarchism lost its connection with the working class. This loss of social influence for anarchism in most countries has nev-

er been recovered. The withdrawal of self-styled anarchists from social movements for activities that don't require long-term commitment, thinking, responsibility or coherence is a serious problem if we ever want anarchism to be a philosophy that can change the world again.

It's pretty clear that the irrelevance of a coherent and social anarchist philosophy is also tied to the reactionary and conservative societies we live in. Despite efforts to break out of the leftist ghetto, much like our socialist mates, today we remain largely irrelevant. The anarchist principles of federalism, direct action, anti-parliamentary politics, and mutual aid are barely connected to a class struggle that is largely institutionalised. With no radical collective movement to use our tactics, we don't feed back into the movements, we don't test our ideas and fresh activists are few and far between. It's a two-way street. The end result of this isolation can often be liberalism dressed in radical clothing, and the dominance of 'lifestyle anarchism' is basically the black flag version of the socialist politics that believes in the revolutionary potential of Bernie Sanders, Syriza and Jeremy Corbyn.

Now I want to skip back to individualism. I want to explain why

I argue that when individualist philosophies are put into practice they can often be damaging to social movements, and can become anti-social rather than anti-capitalist. I think this confusion that starts from the concept of imminent rebellion against authority, meaning that things that aren't actually anti-authoritarian can end up with tacit anarchist support.

Groups like Crimethinc tend to border this line, advocating and fetishizing sub-cultural practices as anti-capitalist in and of themselves with little conceptualisation of how they assist in the struggle against capital and the state, if at all. Squatting, sabotage, petty-crime, theft, arson, and assassinations all register in the arsenal of insurrectional-individualist tactics. Actually, I think this is the definition of the vague term we throw around, 'lifestylism.' A comrade has raised with me that it is perhaps not only that, but it's the result of despair at the failures of long-term organising that leads to believing only immediate actions and 'living politics' can be revolutionary.

It's not that social anarchists don't use tactics like insurrection, sabotage and so on too. But the key thing to consider is if the action is beneficial or negative, collectively empowering or just alienating and anti-social. For example, tactics like sabotage have often been used during union campaigns, the syndicalist organisation the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW)

was pretty famous for this historically. When used as an individual tactic, workers often risk alienation from others, punishment from the state, or a waste of the resources of those who bail them out or organise legal support. Individuals may get a small benefit from stealing, squatting, living on the dole as an ideological choice, but there are always consequences. So when sabotage is done collectively, it can be a powerful tool against the boss, especially so because everyone has each other's backs, and the decision to take action has been made together. It's the small sums of collective actions that become a movement.

In an article on Crimethinc, 'W' argues that: "Shoplifting, dumpster diving, quitting work are all put forward as revolutionary ways to live outside the system, but amount to nothing more than a parasitic way of life which depends on capitalism without providing any real challenge" (2).

It's important to acknowledge that some people may be forced to do some of these things, like stealing, to survive under capitalism, and they shouldn't be demonised for this. We all need to survive in the current system. However, what 'W' is saying is that if you have the option to make these choices, if you can always move back in with your folks or whatever when life gets hard, you're not actually contributing to anti-capitalism - you're just living out some kind of radical liberalism.

***"The truth is, you cannot, ever, completely drop out of capitalism or get away from the state. The people in power are afraid of collective power that makes demands. Not hippie communes."***

The rich, politicians, and anyone in a position of power surely have plenty of time for people who become 'non-participants' in the system. They do not actually challenge power, they do not help organise collectively, they may create small concessions and 'spaces' of existing without the yoke of capitalist burden, but the potential for this to both spread and lead to collective empowerment has to be considered. The truth is, you cannot, ever, completely drop out of capitalism or get away from the state. The people in power are afraid of collective power that makes demands. Not hippie communes.

At this point, it's useful to talk a little about how all of this translates into differences in tactics, politics and strategy.

Firstly, we have politics. This is the level at which we identify the philosophy we believe in - which is anarchism. So starting from the vision of building a world without states, systems of oppression like patriarchy or racism, and capitalism, we have to decide on the appropriate strategies for making that happen.

So, strategy. Here's where we do the most reflection - what does our current society look like? What kind of changes do we need? How could we start making them happen? Are we insurrectionists, are

we syndicalist, are we into community organising, should we be concentrating on propaganda? There is a lot to be figured out.

Finally, tactics. The tactics we employ are the specific details of the strategy we decide upon, as in, what particular actions we undertake to implement the strategy. For example, if you did believe you needed an insurrection, you might form a cell that wants to annihilate capitalists and cops or something (definitely not the Anarchist Affinity line!). If you chose syndicalism, you might look at what industries are most important to organise in right now, and if you want to start a specifically anarchist union or if you want to radicalise existing ones by building shop stewards networks and advocating wildcat strikes. Within social anarchism there are a variety of ideas about strategies, these are just two, very different and broad examples.

Those of us involved in anarchist organising in Australia can tend to fetishize one or the other, or completely muddle them up. Remember, here I'm not just talking about individualists; most anarchist groups in Australia are completely guilty of this too. But at the same time, I think what we like to call 'lifestylism' can be traced back to the early individualism, where personal rebellion and individual, violent insurrection are

considered as the ultimate strategy against the state.

Squatting (occupying unused housing) is a well-known tactic. But if we believe that it's inherently political, we're going to get stuck repeating it over and over when it's not the right strategy. Or when squatting is not an option, where does your political organising go? This kind of thing happens all the time. It's a really big problem in the environmental movement. I'm not really involved in that anymore but it's where I started back in Newcastle, and I saw a fair bit of this confusion.

Squatting is not really a huge thing in Australia, though I do know a number of squatters and there are a few in Melbourne - it's a much bigger thing in Europe. Many anarchists seem to consider squatting as a lifestyle choice (though there are some, I'm sure, who do it because they haven't any other option - I know at least one person who fits this category). There's a difference between a choice and survival here. Living in a squat would appear to give people the space to exist outside typical property relations, maximising personal freedoms and somehow 'propagate' the idea that squatting is an option to the broader community. There is an element of truth in this, but it's actually extremely limited.

Creating 'liberty' for oneself doesn't necessarily mean creating it for others, and sometimes it can even limit the freedoms of others. Squatting isn't necessari-

ly one of those times, but it's not always as helpful a tactic as other options. There is a difference between punks who want to live in a squat cause it's free and they can have parties, and a squat that's used as an accessible social centre that, for example, that helps house refugees. The first is fine, it doesn't really matter to anyone except the landlord. But the second has collective and social power. I'd argue that as anarchists this is exactly our task. We don't just want revolution for ourselves, we want it for everyone.

To turn a squat into a viable social centre it needs resources, organisation, community outreach, and importantly the backing of other social groups willing to defend it when eviction time comes. This is a task anarchist organisations can help with. Let's look at the Workers Solidarity Movement (WSM) in Ireland, they're an anarchist group who doesn't operate, control or dominate any squats. What they do however, is help initiate them, have activists involved in their on-going upkeep and daily activity (one squat in Ireland that has a few WSM members used the workshops to build heaters to send to refugees in Calais), and help defend them and their autonomy against repression from the state. They also organise forums and do the important task of political propaganda helping legitimate squatting as a strategy against capitalism. I use WSM as an example of this because they're particularly

successful - they have an anarchist publication reaches thousands of people monthly, and they have public attention for being at the forefront of several social movements. Imagine what such a powerful anarchist organisation can bring to the defence of autonomy. On the other hand - it doesn't take an anarchist organisation to make squatting a valid social project - I'm just pointing out what I think some important tasks for anarchists are.

Now I'd like to ask: what is a squat compared to a rent strike? This I believe is where we begin to see real collective action forming. Rent strikes aren't a thing here anymore, but Australia does have some history with them. Actually, I almost never hear people talk about them! If you don't know what a rent strike is, it's basically like this: the community in a particular area organises against inflated rents and evictions, you hold some mass meetings, do some propaganda and whatever, maybe you target on the basis of community, maybe you target a particular landlord, but you get to a point where collective power is established and people stop paying rent. When the cops turn up, you picket in defence of whoever they try and evict, maybe you go hassle the state department or the rental agents or something. Not really something we're in a position to do now - but it's worth remembering this exists for when struggle around housing intensifies even more.

What makes rent strikes so much more powerful is that, unlike squatting, they're a viable tactic for a huge portion of the population. Squatting is unavailable to so many people, for so many reasons. There are only so many places, it can be unsuitable for families, for people who need to keep stuff secure for work or whatever, for people with disabilities, for people who want to be guaranteed a hot shower. For those who require stability and security, things we all deserve, squatting is not a real option. Even for many of Australia's homeless, squatting wouldn't be viable - what they need is secure, free housing. Wouldn't it be better if we could organise a mass renters and housing movement committed to direct action and direct democracy, with total autonomy from political parties and the capitalist class? Social movements provide the space to lay the real foundations of a society built from the bottom up.

At the current moment, I think we need to stop and reflect where anarchist political organising needs to go. What are our politics? What strategies do we have which could make anarchist politics relevant again? Do they reflect what Australian society looks like today? We can't just take the CNT model from revolutionary Spain in the 1930's and make it happen here.

Anarchism is the most completely social philosophy - we seek a world based on solidarity,

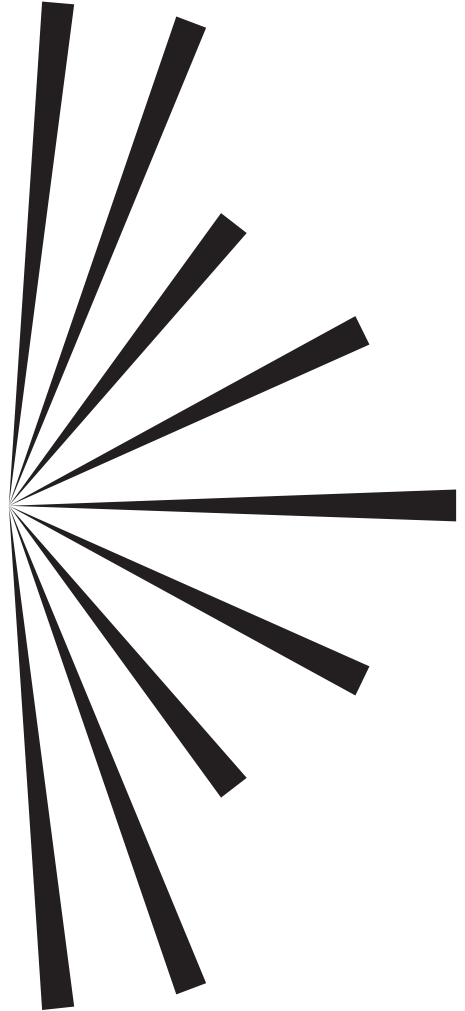
mutual aid and co-operation. We are anti-capitalist, because capitalism is toxic for a healthy social system, not because we're angsty teenagers.

The considered undertaking of practical activity, connecting it to a broader political programme, and the building of dedicated anarchist organisations will only strengthen our ability to make a difference and increase the scope of human freedom both in the here and now, and to lay the groundwork for a revolutionary situation. I'd urge any who believe anarchism is achieved by autonomous, atomised and unorganised individuals to seriously reconsider how they believe revolution is possible, and if it is, what it will take to get there. If we refuse to acknowledge the lessons of the past we will let the state continue to exist, either in its capitalist or socialist form.

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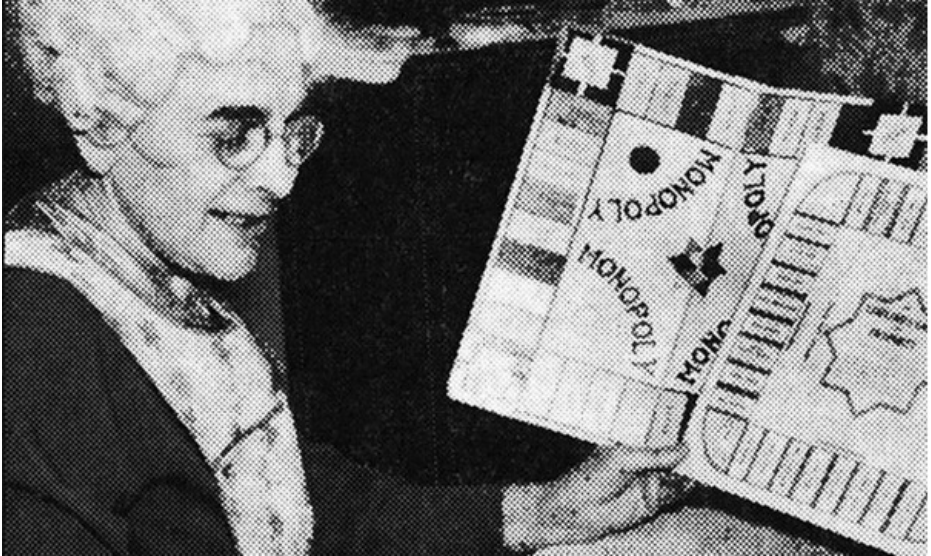
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# LIVING IN A MONOPOLY

By Jacqui



Lizzy Magie, inventor of the Landlord's Game, which we now know as Monopoly, in 1936. Photograph: Anspach Archives

**I**n 1903 Lizzie Magie, patented the 'Landlords Game' - originally intended as an anti-capitalist critique of monopolistic corporate greed. "It is a practical demonstration of the present system of land-grabbing with all its usual outcomes and consequences," Magie wrote in a political magazine. "It might well have been called the 'Game of Life', as it contains all the elements of success and failure in the real world, and the object is the same as the human race in general seem[s] to have, ie, the accumula-

tion of wealth."

The game became popular among left-wing progressives and at university campuses, until some thirty years later when Charles Darrow and his wife played it a dinner party. At the time the game wasn't often bought in a box; rather, it was copied and shared between friends, known as 'the monopoly game'. Darrow was taken with the game and asked his host to make him a set, along with a copy of the more advanced rules. In 1935, he copied and sold the game, now known as Monopoly, to Parker Brothers along with the



myth of its creation.

The object is to become the wealthiest player through buying, renting and selling of a single commodity – property. The game of Monopoly is one of accumulation and power that enables each player the chance to compete. Maggie invented the game to reveal the current economic system and the greed of those monopolising it; though it was over a hundred years ago and many alterations have been made, parallels between playing a game of Monopoly and life under capitalism still exist today.

When you begin a game of monopoly players are given equal odds for success: you each receive \$1500, the board is open, and everyone has the potential to expand an empire. You go around the board like this for a while, buying properties, building houses and hotels, and just having a good ol' time accumulating wealth. Until all of a sudden the game gets really serious. You land on Park Lane, it has a red hotel perched upon it and you realise you're fucked. You count out your paper money, mortgage half your properties and pay the astronomical fee for landing on this spot, but you know it's all over. There's a sickening feeling of anger in your gut as you paste a smile on your face and say, "It's just a game!" But everyone knows what happens next. The leading player gets wealthier and wealthier, accumulating properties as the others are forced to retire – all the

while remembering why they hate Monopoly.

The tendency towards monopoly is deeply rooted in the nature of the capitalist economic system, and unlike the game of Monopoly we don't all start on an equal footing. Capitalism is characterised by gross inequalities in power, wealth and access to resources; and in our society these inequalities are only getting worse. The game of monopoly is well afoot in the Australian housing market, and those of us who weren't born lucky enough to inherit the metaphorical \$1500 are finding it harder and harder maintain secure access to housing.

In 1982, the ABS Survey of Income and Housing revealed that 168,000 or 10% of home buyers spent more than 30% of their gross household income on housing costs. Nearly 30 years later in 2011 these numbers had soared to 640,000, equivalent to 21% of all home buyers. The trend in housing cost burdens reflect rising real house prices; property market booms escalate real house prices to higher levels than they peaked in the previous boom. But with each peak in house prices, household incomes fall continuously behind. According to the same ABS data source, households in 1990 on average valued their homes at four times their average household income, by 2011 this multiple had climbed to nearly six times average household income.

The problem is not one of a shortage of housing, but an ineffi-

***"There are an estimated 84,000 vacant residential properties in Melbourne, the majority owned by property investors and speculators."***

cient and unequal distribution of the stock housing. There are an estimated 84,000 vacant residential properties in Melbourne, the majority owned by property investors and speculators. At the same time, the public housing waiting list has blown out to ten years as 34,000 people wait for a place to live. This is both obscene, and the logical consequence of an economic system in which housing is not a human right, but rather a commodity to be bought sold and speculated on for private profit.

The Australian government has done everything it can to support the rampant cycle of property speculation which is driving housing unaffordability across Australia. The combination of "negative gearing" and a concessionary rates of capital gains tax on residential real estate have amounted to a massive transfer of wealth to those wealthier enough to engage in property speculation. Negative gearing means that individuals with high incomes can lower their income tax liabilities by borrowing to buy investment properties. When these speculators cash out, they avoid tax again, thanks to the Capital Gains Tax concessions. The result is that \$11.7 billion dollars a year that might have been collected in tax revenue is instead funnelled into the pockets of the

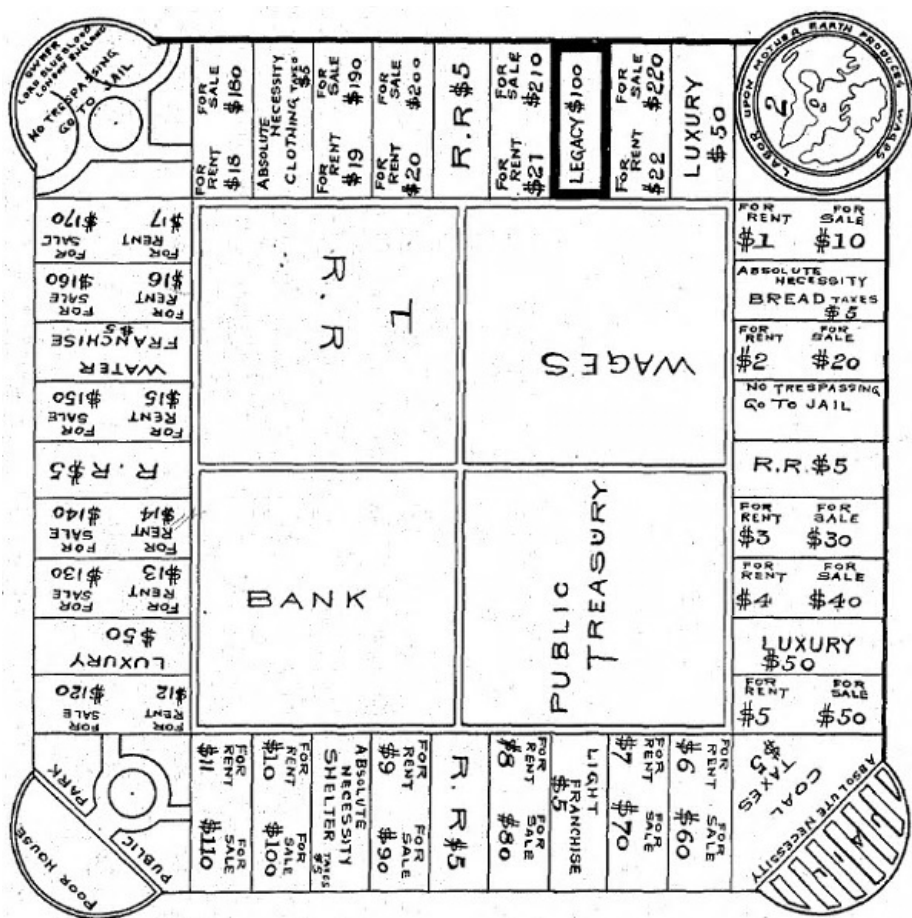
wealthiest, and this occurs in a process that drives up property prices and rents, and progressively locks large sections of the working class out of the housing market.

Unfortunately for us, capitalism is an adaptable system, capable of evolving and transforming over time. Since Magie invented the 'Landlords Game' in 1903 we have seen a major merger movement for industry, greater concentration of capital, advanced selling power through advertising, and a mass expansion for the market through globalization and imperialism. Just like the outcome of the game, the monopolisation of capital results in the most powerful minorities dividing all the profits whilst the greater part of humanity suffers from ever increasing poverty. The standard of living for the wealthy is based on the extreme oppression of the working class.

So whilst there are clear parallels between a game of Monopoly and the conditions of life in a capitalist society, it is also clear that the conditions of our lives are unequal and the outcomes far worse for most. You don't start on 'GO' at the same time as everyone else, you're certainly not given the same amount of wealth to begin with, all of the properties, utilities and businesses are already owned, and it seems like your dice only

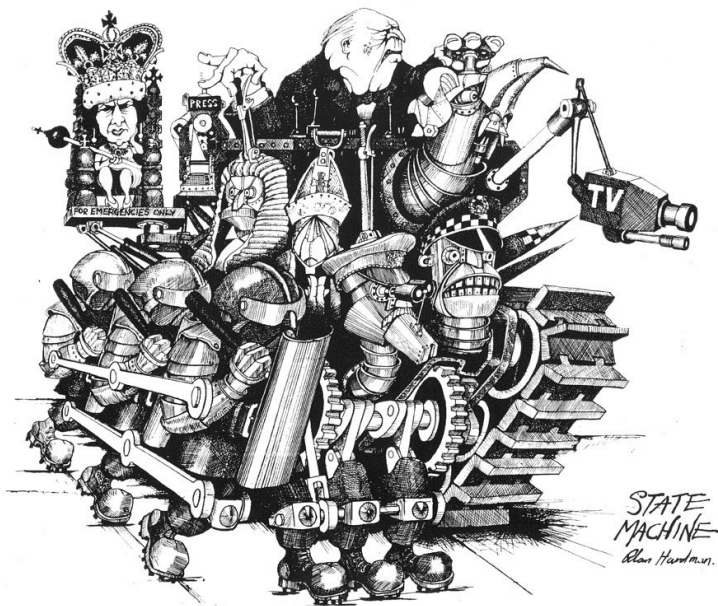
roll ones and twos. It's also really hard to find free parking. The truth is most of us go around the board year in and year out trying to pass 'GO' for our measly wage, hoping we can scrape together enough money to pay our rent and survive. If you can't pay your rent you don't get to stop playing, you have to keep rolling your shitty dice, trying to make it back to 'GO' or dying in

the process. Meanwhile the minority who monopolise the board don't ever really begin the game, certain players just pass their piece on, accompanied by their every-growing pile of notes, properties, and little red hotels.



# MEANS AND ENDS: ANARCHIST VS MARXIST PRAXIS

By Mitch



*"The very revolutionaries who claim that they are against the state, and for eliminating the state...see as their central task after a revolution to build up a state that is more solid, more centralized and more all-embracing than the old one." – Ron Taber, 1988 (1).*

A remarkably common attitude among revolutionaries of all stripes is that 'the means justify the ends'. We're told it is acceptable to embrace authoritarian organisational practices because these practices are necessary to achieve an anti-capitalist revolution. As anar-

chists we argue that the theory and organisational practice of revolutionary groups must be consistent with the principles upon which we want a future society to be based. We believe that the praxis of groups which seek communism should point them toward communism, and not toward statism, authoritarianism, hierarchy, and centralism. This is not mere idealism, the cold hard fact is that 'ends' do not justify 'means', rather 'means create ends'. Revolutionaries who embrace 'means' that are in contradiction with the kind of society they wish to create will consis-

tently fail to create that society.

Amongst Marxist-Leninist political tendencies the contradiction between means and ends starts with the idea of the vanguard party as the vehicle for social change. The vanguard party is supposed to be comprised of the most enlightened and class-conscious members of the working class. In practice, the vanguard party begins as a self-selecting minority. It seeks to draw in the most militant elements of the working class, but its structure remains centralised and authoritarian. This minority occupies centralised leadership positions and directs the political activity, strategy and tactics of the party. Whether or not there is real democratic accountability within the vanguard party on some intermittent basis, the vanguard party is a command structure in which decisions are made by a minority, and the majority is expected to put the plans and desires of the leadership into action.

The end goal of the vanguard party is to pursue a revolution and achieve control of a 'workers' state'. During a transitional period between capitalism and communism called 'the dictatorship of the proletariat', the vanguard would utilise this authoritarian, hierarchical, and centralised state, in order to coordinate the running of society.

The structure of the vanguard party prefigures the structure of the workers' state after the revolution, but it does not achieve the directly democratic communist society it

claims to aspire toward. As a centralised minority, the party would have gained control over all the working class in a society. The same working class that historically and necessarily did the grunt-work to bring the revolution to that point.

Vladimir Lenin himself said, "a party is the vanguard of a class, and its duty is to lead the masses and not merely to reflect the average political level of the masses" (2).

According to Leninists, the vanguard party is necessitated by the idea that the working class is too burdened by 'the muck of ages' to emancipate itself, for itself. This means that the ruling ideas of capitalism plague people's ability to be satisfactorily class conscious. These ruling ideas include sexism, racism, homophobia, and nationalism.

This is the historically-selective and pessimistic basis on which the enlightened vanguardists decide that their party is necessary.

Yet the vanguard, who set out on a convoluted road which is "diametrically opposed to communism" are plagued by some muck of their own (3). The latent authoritarian and hierarchical nature of the capitalist state remain as unchecked cornerstones of the workers' state.

As Murray Bookchin argued in 'Listen, Marxist', "...the deep-rooted conservatism of [so called] 'revolutionaries' is almost painfully evident; the authoritarian leader and hierarchy replace the patriarch and the school bureaucracy; the discipline of the Movement re-

***"It's a perversion and a contradiction of the politics that originate these theories that workers should die in droves to overthrow thousands of bosses and replace them all with one boss — the state. Especially when this boss conceals its class status; cloaks itself in the guise of a fellow worker, of a comrade."***

places the discipline of bourgeois society; the authoritarian code of political obedience replaces the state; the credo of 'proletarian morality' replaces the mores of puritanism and the work ethic. The old substance of exploitative society reappears in new forms, draped in a red flag, etc..." (4).

Classical Marxist and Leninist analyses of the state fail to acknowledge the way that assuming state power changes any 'workers' who do so. Contrary to what Marx argued, workers cease being workers when they take control of a state. They become self-appointed managers of workers, and so they cement themselves as a new managerial class, entirely distinct from the working class.

Mikhail Bakunin was correct when he argued that the 'workers state', "will consist of ex-workers. And from the heights of the State they begin to look down upon the whole common world of the workers. From that time on they represent not the people but themselves" (5).

It's a perversion and a contradiction of the politics that originate these theories that workers should die in droves to overthrow thousands of bosses and replace them all with one boss — the

state. Especially when this boss conceals its class status; cloaks itself in the guise of a fellow worker, of a comrade. It deviously calls itself a worker and not a manager of workers to justify its authority.

Leon Trotsky was right when he complained of Stalinism that, "In a country where the sole employer is the State, opposition means death by slow starvation. The old principle: who does not work shall not eat, has been replaced by a new one: who does not obey shall not eat" (6). It is ironic that he saw no contradiction in this state of affairs when he was so intimately involved in constructing Russia's one party state.

It seems the over-worked proletariat is destined to remain the over-worked proletariat but a few enlightened workers graduate to a privileged position where they co-ordinate what work will be done, by whom, and by when. The creativity, initiative, and the ideas the emancipated working class have for the new society are apparently disposable in the eyes of Marxist Leninists. At least, they're not worth as much as the ideas of the vanguardists who make the familiar and misguided claim that they know what's right for people better than people do themselves.



It is evident that the praxis of vanguardists doesn't prefigure anything beyond their own ascent to power. After they have gained power, the so-called 'withering away' of the workers' state is a barely developed and meaningless sentiment based on the false idea that no classes would exist after workers (read: ex-workers turned administrators of workers) take power. This means that the fixed state institutions; its armies; its centralised networks of production; its education and media facilities that fill the society with the state's own ideas, would magically disappear with the abolition of class.

The workers' state won't and can't wither away. All ruling minorities have an interest in maintaining their position as such. A newly installed ruling minority will use its power and authority to further justify and entrench its own power and authority. It will have under its thumb a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence in a society, which has historically been used to give the workers' state the authority to eliminate the state's non-reactionary dissenters. Instead of encouraging the expression of ideas for the betterment of society from all who make up that society, the workers' state creates itself with its own elitism and belief in the superiority of the ideas of the ruling vanguard. This is a fundamental part of the praxis leading to it. In order to maintain its rule, the so-called workers' state will actively combat any

opposing ideas with propaganda through the centralised control of media outlets and educational facilities, if not with direct force.

Fabbri notes that the state has "bureaucratic, military and economic foundations..." and that "...in a short space of time what one would have would not be the state abolished, but a state stronger and more energetic than its predecessor and which would come to exercise those functions proper to it - the ones Marx recognised as being such - 'keeping the great majority of producers under the yoke of a numerically small exploiting minority'" (3).

Anarchists argue that while a revolutionary force is being built to smash the capitalist state, we must also be building the kinds of prefigurative institutions that will make libertarian socialism possible. Our task is to argue for and build a practice of neighbourhood, community, and workers councils. The alternative to a vanguard party is the creation of federations of participatory democratic bodies, outside the control of this or that political faction. To the greatest extent possible, before, during, but most importantly, after a revolution, these directly democratic, horizontal, and decentralised institutions must replace the centralised, state-run equivalents. In this way, anarchists seek to build the embryo of libertarian socialism within the capitalist system, with the aim of both providing for the people where the



state can't, and of building the new world in the shell of the old.

When the capitalist state is smashed by the popular uprising, these decentralised institutions and councils can continue functioning, and any remaining useful functions of the state become coordinated by further federated councils of workers and regular people. If we have built the practice of participatory democracy, a centralised workers' state is never required.

Of course, there would be the need to defend the revolution, and to this end anarchists argue for a people's militia "rooted in workplaces and communities... and directed overall by the federation of councils [would] enforce its will against armed counter-revolution or foreign invasion," according to Wayne Price (7).

If we are opposed to the domination of a ruling class, clique or party, we must build a libertarian socialism that involves the participation of the mass of society in the process of decision making, economic coordination, and military defence.

The partisans of the 'workers' state' and the vanguard party have a revolutionary program committed to anything but communism. Given they propose a society where power and initiative are both necessarily centralised features belonging only to the state and not to every person equally, they are not creating the necessary basis for communism, but rather totalitarianism.

Anarchists wish to create a so-

ciety where no one person can exploit another for their own gain, and so the stepladder to power that is the state must be knocked over so that it can't be reassembled — Not left to stand, and certainly not used to govern with a pessimistic fear that the people necessary to the revolution's success are incapable of creating a new society through their own organising efforts.

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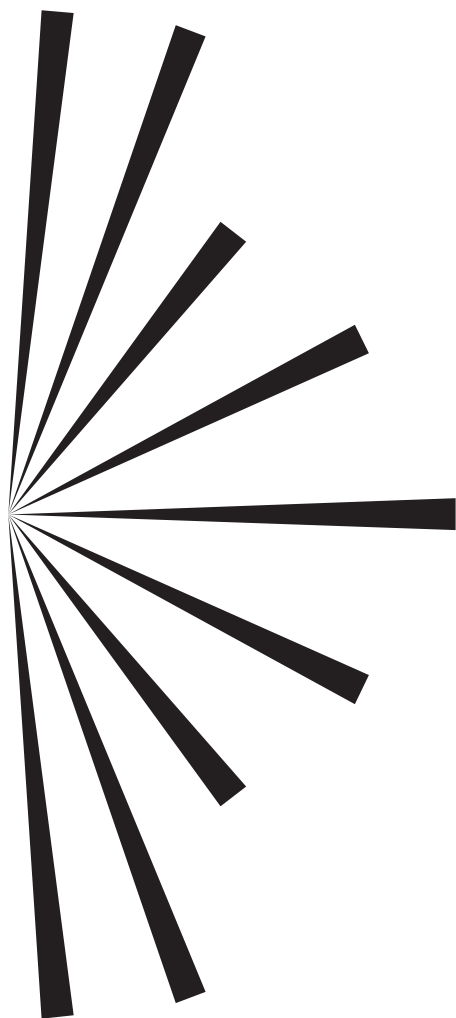
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# YOUR CONSUMER CHOICES WON'T SAVE THE PLANET

By Kieran Bennett



**S**urely if we were all more committed to buying green, fair trade, or ethically produced products, there would be less environmental and economic exploitation in the world, right?

The idea that our consumer choices are 'votes' for the kind of world we want to live in is a powerful one, but it is an idea that is gravely mistaken.

Our current economic system, capitalism, is eating away at the ecological basis of our existence, whilst exploiting and dominating the lives of billions of people. This destruction, domination and exploitation is driven not by consumer choices, but by the logic of capital accumulation.

All businesses are confronted by the need to remain profitable. Businesses that do not generate a

healthy return on investment will soon go bankrupt and be replaced by those enterprises that are profitable. But it is not enough to simply be profitable, all businesses are in competition to achieve ever greater investment and profit. Capitalists invest their money in enterprises based on their understanding of what will deliver the highest return, whilst businesses seek bigger returns by achieving greater market share. They achieve greater market share by lowering prices, selling more, and driving their competition out of the market. It is this process that drives capitalist enterprises to consume larger and larger quantities of resources, in order to produce more, and sell more, whilst paying workers less.

The logic of ethical consumerism assumes that the destructive waste of capitalism is caused by

***"The 'more ethical alternative' is rarely better than a greenwash that serves to improve corporate image and assuage middle class guilt whilst doing little to change underlying practices in production."***

the demands made by consumers (most of whom are in turn workers). The argument goes that it is our desire for more stuff that has pushed capitalist firms to produce in ever greater quantities, and at ever lower costs no matter the ecological or human impact. This assumption is incorrect.

Capitalism is driven towards expansion, irrespective of the level of demand that exists for the goods and services that capitalist enterprises produce. It is for this reason that capitalists first chased new markets for their goods (and new sources of raw materials) across the globe. Capitalism now embraces the entire world in what is, more or less, one capitalist economic system.

Despite the fact that capitalism now embraces the globe, the logic of capitalist expansion remains unchanged. Individual capitalist enterprises must strive to produce greater levels of profit, or they will be replaced by those that do. Whenever capitalism as a whole is not growing, it is in crisis. In order to continue clearing the market place of this over-abundance of production, capitalist enterprises engage in a continual process of inventing and manufacturing new needs and new wants among consumers. There is even a

whole industry that specializes in this practice; it is called marketing.

The decision by a minority of people to buy this type of product over that type of product will not challenge the accumulative logic of capital. It is capitalism's drive toward perpetual growth that is consuming the ecological basis of our continued existence.

But capitalists love the logic of ethical consumerism. When a concerned group or NGO calls for a boycott of this or that product or practice, capitalist enterprises can profit from selling us the greener, more ethical alternative at a higher price! The 'more ethical alternative' is rarely better than a greenwash that serves to improve corporate image and assuage middle class guilt whilst doing little to change underlying practices in production. The wealthiest may have been sold the image of social good, but the bulk of us can do little other than put food on our tables and clothes on our backs at the cheapest possible prices.

A particularly pernicious strand of ethical consumerism is expressed in relation to climate change and energy consumption. Those wealthy enough to afford 'green energy', solar panels, or household lithium battery arrays gleefully finance wasteful new

industries. The wealthy enough eco-warriors then turn their noses up at the destructive 'choices' of the great mass of people just struggling to maintain access to heating, cooking and light from any available energy source.

Even as larger numbers of the middle class in the developed world pour money into 'clean energy', they don't somehow reduce the consumption of coal, oil or gas. Lower demand for non-renewable energy lowers the price of coal, gas and oil inputs, which is readily sucked up by industries that will always consume the cheapest available energy source, or be replaced by the manufacturer that does.

Ethical consumerism is worse than useless. The false choice of 'ethical consumption' gives those firms most exposed to the risks of consumer backlash a ready source of green wash, and it provides new opportunities to sell 'ethical' products at higher prices. Whilst doing this, 'ethical consumerism' diverts attention away from the dynamic that is destroying our environment, exploiting workers, and wasting resources. Capitalism requires and is driven towards ceaseless, unending, economic growth. This requires ever an expanding consumption of the earth's resources, the production and sale of ever more products, and the subordination of the mass of the world's population.

I fully understand and accept why people with the ability to

do so might wish to minimise the impact that their consumptive choices have of the planet, on the environment, or on working conditions. But we cannot simply end sweatshops, or the burning of fossil fuels, or destructive agricultural practices, by boycotting this or that product. If we are to save a planet worth living on, we have to end an economic system that is making our planet unlivable.

# MORE THAN JUST SQUATTING: AN INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTONOMISTS OF SOCIAL LOG BOLOGNA

With Tom



**W**ith an upturn of interest in 'the housing question' in Melbourne, or more broadly in Australia, we thought we'd ask some questions of our friends at the Social Log collective in Bologna, Italy, about their squatting projects and their connection to the broader working class movement.

Social Log is a collective of 'autonomia', a branch of Marxism which has parallels with anarchist theory given Autonomia's focus on self-organisation, grassroots initiatives and social reproduction, and

struggle outside the direction of vanguardist parties and 'official' unions. They run a number of projects, including a 'desk' or 'pop-up' where they distribute propaganda related to issues affecting the workers of Bologna, and help connect activists between different struggles. One major squat they initiated and supported was an ex-Telecom building, which housed over 300 people, mostly migrants from the North African community. This was violently evicted not long ago by 200 officers and 40 police trucks, despite massive resistance



from the community. Social Log's outreach and ability to connect to real local struggles and assist them practically, while helping them maintain militancy and autonomy should be something anarchists can draw lessons from. It shares a lot of parallels with Platformist/Especcifist anarchism – that is seeking to insert into social struggle to encourage, defend and help retain working class autonomy and militancy. The language may be different, but the intentions are very close.

**Can you tell us some basics about the project of Social Log Bologna? How did it come about? Who set it up? How was it run?**

Social Log was born in November 2013, in the aftermath of a massive 100,000 person 'autonomous' demonstration in Rome on October 19. A number of antagonistic movements (Turin area's No TAV, Bologna's logistics workers, Sicily's "No Muos", Pisa and Rome's own housing struggle initiatives – plus grassroots unions, as well as environmental committees and students and workers' collectives) converged on that day in order to oppose the EU-dictated austerity policies of the late Letta government and laid siege to the Ministry of Infrastructures for two days. Back then the housing emergency was unfolding in Italy because of the fallout of the 2008 financial crisis, as well as the earlier grassroots initiatives to tackle it.

A breakthrough in this way were the so-called "Tsunami Tours" – organized by the Blocchi Precari Metropolitani, Coordinamento di Lotta per la Casa and Progetto Degage collectives – which occupied in large numbers scores of vacant buildings in Rome in early 2013.

In Bologna our social centre Laboratorio Crash was focused on precarious workers and university and high school students, but it did not have a housing struggle desk at the time. Always starting from the material needs of the lower classes, we wanted to contribute to the nationwide network which was organizing through the Abitare nella Crisi ("Dwelling in the Crisis") platform, too. We were in the middle of a great workers' effervescence in the logistics' sector in our area. To make a long story short, between 2012 and 2014 there had been lot of protests, strikes, pickets and blockades at the warehouses of big Italian companies – which were exploiting a workforce mainly comprised of migrants through bogus 'co-operatives'. As a social centre, and with fellow student collectives joining the grassroots SI COBAS union in these actions, we shaped the Social Log initiative in order to give continuity to this particular struggle.

First, we wanted to keep together the belligerent subjectivity we built along with these workers. Starting from meeting their needs (some of them were hired again after a number of victorious battles – but others were not, and were

***"...we wanted Social Log to function as a logistics of social struggles (hence its name)."***

starting to be short on money and under threat of eviction), which were the same as ours: being ourselves precarious workers and students threatened by the increased grants cuts and the reintroduction of underage labour, through partnership between high schools and private businesses internship projects. By reinforcing interaction and circulation of struggles, when we moved on to occupy buildings it was easier to communicate between different groups and organize actions: the logistics worker could be informed of a radical talk at the university - or the high school student could attend to a benefit event organized by the housing struggle committee.

It is exactly in this way that we wanted Social Log to function as a logistics of social struggles (hence its name).

The physical occupation of the building of Social Log's 'desk' (which opens 2 days per week and has been managed by militants – later to be joined by committed occupiers) was only a first step in building and organizing this framework. The desk deals with all kinds of housing distress (homelessness, eviction, foreclosures, issues in public social housing...) stretching its auditing and inquiry to other issues (transports, healthcare, labour issues, unjust taxation...) as well. Always avoiding and rejecting a charity, bleeding-heart ap-

proach to these issues, and rather working on empowerment through forms of collective re-appropriation (squatting) of the right to housing (and beyond).

**You've been evicted from the occupied telecommunications building. How long did the project last? And how did the collective organise to fight state repression?**

The project is still ongoing! After 2 years and half we still hold two housing occupations in Bologna at the moment of this interview, accommodating dozens of individuals and families. Like our social centre, they are under attack right now because of the joint interests of a maverick public prosecutor and of the political directions given to the Police Department from Rome. Plus, there is political pressure linked to the upcoming administrative elections in Bologna.

We can also count on our Iquilini Resistenti ("Resisting Tenants") committee, still working to prevent evictions of people who are in economic distress and cannot pay the rent, or whose housing contract expired. Even if a core of militants helps with coordinating them, the committee is still made up of people with similar housing problems, mobilizing each time one of them is under eviction, and attempting to postpone it at a later date – until a solution is found.

Finally, there is the self-organized initiative of the Galaxy residence tenants. Some of the residents were living in a former occupation of ours - the ex-Telecom building, which was accommodating around 200 people. After they were evicted by a massive police dispositif (expression of power), thanks to the pressure of the struggle they were relocated to the Galaxy residence – one set up by the city council in order to alleviate the housing emergency. Previously they were not entitled to that, and we consider it a little success - in a region that, after decades of social-democratic welfare, is experiencing a full-fledged implementation of neoliberal policies. Being already politicized through pickets, assemblies and other means of antagonist socialization, they came in contact with the other tenants of the residence and started a battle to reclaim income and other legal rights that a Renzi government law denies them.

In addition to head-on resistance against the evictions, which we try to make participated in by everyone as best as they can and feel they can do, we finance legal expenses through self-managed events at our social centre, in the university and elsewhere. Of course, the communal dimension and circulation of struggles featuring different age, ethnic and worker groups - which was built all the way from pickets to occupations - helped prevent the subjectivity

from disbanding, even after most serious blows.

### **How did Social Log fit into the broader anti-capitalist movement in Bologna? How does it contribute to broader struggles?**

The movement is going through a complex and difficult phase in Bologna, as in other parts of Italy as well. The Renzi government, with a 'start-upper, go-getter' attitude mixed with a certain flavour of institutional populism, directly attacked the movements' political space in housing, environmental, labour and education issues with targeted legislation. Some cracks in this monolith appeared with recent scandals and difficulty to consolidate a territorial ruling class (which has been then replaced by technical commissioner-like subjects), the government is still able to thrive by capitalizing political apathy (sometimes driven by the outright struggle for daily survival by the masses) and support from interested and deluded minorities.

The institutional left all but disappeared or moved rightwards – mostly in a liberal but in some cases even in an authoritarian direction. Therefore, people in the movement that used to rely on them are now directly entering institutional politics (à la Syriza and Podemos, but without even the slightest degree of popular legitimacy that these political projects were entrusted by their seminal grassroots movements – drawing

their Italian counterparts from defeated minority social-democrat parties). These subjects also endorse an idea of being able to better manage social care issues and institutions at proximity level rather than state/capitalist forces, by teaming up with charities, civic committees and other "civil society" groups. This is relatively dangerous as their ultimate outcome is, through the promotion of a watered-down form of militancy (activism) and non-confrontational or merely spectacular practices (which are by definition repeatable by anyone) to create a weak subjectivity, as they appease social rage and style themselves as mediators/managers of social emergencies.

We say relatively because our process, being aware of this framework, has been trying to develop an alternative to it – and is often successful in doing so. By instead addressing the urgency and longing for radical practices by groups of citizens who suffer the retreat of the state from their sphere of interest in the forms of cuts and increasingly authoritarian management, and feel threatened and alone: disgruntled teachers, disenchanted social workers, pensioners, overloaded healthcare operators, and so on.

Also, we distance ourselves from the movement's elites living in their own separate comfort sphere, promoting abstract platforms and practices; we think we have been able to provide a wel-

coming environment for those subjects from the orphaned left or from grassroots organizations, dealing with real needs, to pursue their initiatives. From camp kitchens during occupations and evictions hosted by people's canteens and our in-house Workshop of Mestizo Cuisine to memorial marches for university comrades killed by police in the '70s; from exhibitions by people's gyms to benefit sells of radical farmers' products we test and experience new forms of antagonist socialization.

### **What has been the lasting impact?**

Given the still in-progress character of Social Log, at the least we can say that the response by the city has been encouraging: many people started to show up at our desk in the last year, to the point their numbers were comparable with those of the top-funded, established (and bureaucratic) mainstream unions. The housing issue was able to overcome a great deal of the stigma of "free-riding" – 'abusive occupiers' versus 'hard-working citizen-taxpayers', as many people showed up to contribute to some internal projects of the occupations (such as a children's playroom) or provide them with food and furniture.

Also, political space was opened for other initiatives, both ours and other groups'. The eviction of the ex-Telecom building last October triggered a crisis be-

tween state and local institutions and, after a march of 5000 people the following saturday, the emotional fallout was the linchpin for a massive popular confrontation against a national demonstration of right-wing and xenophobic parties in November.

Thus, the legacy (and still the pivotal character) of Social Log is to make the housing issue a springboard to exploit the contradictions among the ruling class institutions, in order to create space of autonomy and counterpower in the metropolis; by contending its battleground to the state and capitalist forces and establishing alternative patterns of development and relationships. Which are already free from those forces, but always prepared to resist their attacks, and

organizing to consolidate and expand their scope and framework.

**You can keep up to date with Social Log at <http://www.infoaut.org/index.php/english> or on facebook.**





# ANARCHIST AFFINITY'S STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The following points of agreement are neither complete nor final. They represent, at best, where our group was at the time they were adopted.

1. As anarchists we fight to create a self-managed, socialist and stateless society, in which all contribute freely according to ability, and through which all have full access to the material basis for pursuing their individual and collective fulfilment. In this libertarian socialist society, individual freedom is harmonised with communal obligations through cooperation, directly democratic decision making and social and economic equality. We believe such a society is both desirable and possible, and we actively work toward overcoming the hierarchies, exploitation and systems of oppression that stand in its way.

2. To confront oppression in all its forms, the self-organised activity of all persons experiencing

oppression is necessary. Systems of oppression manifest both as structures in the economic system and in the ideology of the dominant culture. Within the dominant culture of our society, intertwined oppressive systems include (but are not limited to) sexism, racism, queerphobia, transphobia and ableism. These oppressive systems, whilst occurring within the context of capitalism and shaped to serve its purpose, are not reducible to capitalism. Unless we actively struggle against all oppressive power systems, these hierarchies will be reproduced both within our own organisations and in any post-capitalist society. We see fighting against these forms of oppression as just as important to the creation of an anarchist society as fighting capitalism and the



state. Only by working to eliminate oppressive power relations within the working classes will we be able to create a revolutionary movement capable of genuinely transforming society.

3. Australian capitalism is founded on an act of genocide – the murder and dispossession of this continent’s indigenous people. Capitalism on this continent was built on the seizure and exploitation of indigenous land, and continued attacks on indigenous communities are perpetrated by Australian capitalism and its racist state in the pursuit of what lands and resources that remain. We unequivocally support the ongoing struggle for indigenous self-determination in Australia, and recognise that indigenous sovereignty over the Australian landmass was never ceded.

4. Capitalism is a social system based on the private ownership of the means of production (land, factories, workplaces, machinery and access to raw materials). A tiny minority own the means of production and profit from the productive labour of the working class. The working class consists of all whose access to the means of existence requires that they place their ability to labour at the service of capital. This includes all who labour for a wage, all who are presently unemployed, and all who labour in the reproduction of the working class (domestic labour). Workers are paid the minimum the capital-

ist can get away with in a given situation, and the capitalist steals the rest. The private property owned by capitalists is the wealth stolen from past generations of workers. Capitalism denies the vast majority their economic and social inheritance through recourse to violence and coercion. Any incursion into private property is punished by the state. This system, capitalism, the state and the oppressive ideologies that support it, must be abolished in their entirety.

5. The state is a centralised structure in which a small number of people, through their control of the police, military and courts (a monopoly on ‘legitimate’ violence), impose decisions on the vast majority. The state is not simply a “body of armed men” in service of the dominant class, it is also an institution that develops its own interest and that seeks to perpetuate its existence and expand its power. As anarchists we wholly reject the state, and instead we aim for “the most complete realisation of democracy—democracy in the fields, factories, and neighbourhoods.”

6. Capitalism reaches across the entire globe. Military and economic imperialism (so-called globalisation) continue to subordinate most of the globe to the capitalist system, securing access to resources, labour and markets for the capitalist core. As capitalism is global, the struggle against capitalism must also be global, and we must

act in solidarity and support for the struggles of oppressed people wherever they occur.

7. Capitalism has wrought upon our planet a global ecological crisis that now threatens the basis of existence for the majority of humanity. Capitalist entities grow or perish, whenever capital is not growing it is in crisis. Capitalism, as the effective cause the present environmental crisis, cannot effectively solve or even lessen the extent of environmental degradation. Capitalism's demand for continued growth on our finite planet is at odds with human survival as a species, and therefore as a matter of necessity, and not just desirability, it must be abolished.

8. The role of anarchists is to build the capacity of oppressed peoples as a whole to struggle for our collective emancipation. It is only when the collective and conscious social force of the mass of oppressed people exceeds the power of capitalism and the state, that a revolution with truly libertarian socialist potential be possible.

9. We believe that revolutionary unionism, or syndicalism, is an essential strategy to build the collective power of the working class. We seek to build rank and file organisations that unite workers across existing unions, and advocate for directly democratic structures and militant strategy.

10. We unite as a specific anarchist organisation on the basis of theoretical unity, tactical unity, collective responsibility and federalism. By theoretical unity we mean developing and organising around a shared understanding of anarchism, capitalism and the context in which we operate. By tactical unity we mean developing and collectively implementing a common strategy for achieving our goals. By collective responsibility we mean agreeing to act collectively – rather than individually in the pursuit of our common strategy. By federalism we mean organising on a directly democratic “grass roots up” basis, rejecting any “top down” command structure.

## FOOTNOTES

1. *Michael Schmidt & Lucien van der Walt, Black Flame: The revolutionary class politics of anarchism and syndicalism, p. 70.*

